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NDA WORKING ON HIGHLY PATHOGENIC AVIAN INFLUENZA IN NEBRASKA

Risk to people from HPAI H5 infections considered to be low

LINCOLN - The Nebraska Department of Agriculture (NDA) in conjunction with the United States Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) has confirmed the presence of highly pathogenic H5N2 avian influenza (HPAI) in a commercial layer flock in Dixon County. The flock of 1.7 million chickens is located within the Central flyway where this strain of avian influenza has previously been identified.

"Unfortunately, Nebraska has joined a long list of states currently dealing with highly pathogenic avian influenza," said NDA Director Greg Ibach. "We are working closely with our counterparts at USDA APHIS, as well as all of our Nebraska state agency partners to ensure we are following proper protocols to address this situation. The goal is to quarantine the flock and attempt to control and contain the virus as quickly as possible."

According to Ibach, the farm has been quarantined and the birds on the property will be depopulated. NDA will work with Nebraska Department of Environmental Quality to ensure proper disposal of dead birds.

The Centers for Disease Control considers the risk to people from HPAI H5 infections to be low. Proper handling and cooking of poultry and eggs to an internal temperature of 165 degrees kills the virus. Eggs from this facility are processed and go through pasteurization, eliminating product consumption risk. This is an egg laying facility and therefore the chickens are not consumed.

"We are moving expeditiously on this case in an effort to protect the collective Nebraska poultry industry," Ibach said. "We will need the assistance of all poultry producers, large and small, to help with this process."

NDA will be establishing a perimeter around the farm, and as is the USDA protocol, visiting all locations within a 6.2 mile radius that may have poultry. Ibach is asking Nebraska poultry producers to follow strict biosecurity measures on their farms and to monitor their flocks for symptoms of the virus and notify NDA immediately if they suspect any problems. All bird owners, whether commercial producers or backyard enthusiasts, should prevent contact between their birds and wild birds, and report sick birds or unusual bird deaths to State/Federal officials, either through NDA by calling 877-800-4080 or through USDA's toll-free number at 1-866-536-7593.

As part of the existing USDA avian influenza response plans, federal and state partners as well as industry are following these five basic steps: 1) Quarantine – restricting movement of poultry and poultry-moving equipment into and out of the control area; 2) Eradicate – humanely euthanizing the affected flock(s); 3) Monitor region – testing wild and domestic birds in a broad area around the quarantine area; 4) Disinfect – kills the virus in the affected flock locations; and 5) Test – confirming that the poultry farm is AI virus-free.

Additional information on HPAI can be found online at www.nda.nebraska.gov. Information is available for producers, media and the general public.

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